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IN OUR VIEW for Sunday — February 20, 2005

- Judging Kathleen Watanabe

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Governor Linda Lingle has nominated Kathleen Watanabe as a Fifth Circuit Court judge. Watanabe, who is a Kapa'a High School graduate, has most recently served as head of Human Resources for the State of Hawai'i in the Lingle administration. She served as a per diem judge in the Kaua'i courtroom from the mid- to late-1990s.

Her husband Wayne Watanabe is an effective and qualified Kaua'i educator and education administrator who has been serving on O'ahu, taking on some tough jobs in areas of poverty in Honolulu.

We believe the right decision was made, and we encourage the State Senate to approve Kathleen Watanabe to succeed recently-retired Judge Clifford Nakea. She knows Kaua'i well, has a strong background in law and in administration, served as County Attorney for Kaua'i, has shown good judgment in the past and together with her husband makes up one of the top community service-oriented couples in Hawai'i.

Serving on the bench at the Fifth Circuit Court would also make Kathleen Watanabe an excellent role model for students attending public high schools on Kaua'i. She has made it in the big city off island, and is now poised to take on one of the most prominent and important civic roles on Kaua'i.

Our Fifth Circuit Court judges direct the flow of justice on Kaua'i, and their decisions affect not just those on trial before them, but how the guilty, and innocent, are tried. A judge must weigh clearly the facts and be able to gauge the impact of their decisions outside the courtroom and beyond the days in court. A bad decision sets a low standard for the community, while a just one may change the life of a criminal for the good, as well as set a pattern for the residents of Kaua'i.

Hopefully, we'll see both the Watanabes back on Kaua'i in the future. They've provided excellent leadership here in the past, have done well in Honolulu and now may be returning to again serve our community.

The Garden Island
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